

Response TPAC to accusation of 'conflict of interest'

June 2013

1. At the TPAC stakeholder forum two individual TPAC members have been accused of having a conflict of interest.
2. The independence of members of TPAC is stipulated in Article 3 of the standing orders of the Committee: *'The Committee shall consist of at least four independent experts, one of whom shall be the Chair'* (Art. 3(1)). Art 3(3) states that *'The Committee members must avoid conflicts of interests. If a conflict of interests arises, they shall notify the Chair accordingly and refrain from voting. The members shall notify the Chair and the Foundation of any (additional) positions they hold that may affect their independence.'* Furthermore all members of SMKs Committees of Experts are required to sign a statement of independence before they are accepted.
3. The anonymous contributor at the stakeholder forum states that: *"Gerard Persoon and Tieme Wanders both work for WWF and FSC respectively. Both NGO's have been involved in legal procedures against TPAC-acceptance of any certification system other than FSC."*
4. The arguments brought forward by the anonymous contributor are that *"Tieme Wanders is the Director of the Congo Basin Program for FSC certification (...). His portfolio with the FSC Congo Basin project is most likely a paid retribution, implying that he is directly employed by FSC"*. Regarding Prof. Persoon the contributor brings forward that Mr Persoon is a member of the Supervisory Board of the World Wildlife Fund Netherlands and was the delegation leader of a trip of parliamentarians in 2006 to Kalimantan. The trip was initiated by WWF, Friends of the Earth Netherlands and IUCN Netherlands.
5. The accusation regarding Mr Wanders seems to be based on a misunderstanding of Mr Wanders activities. Mr Wanders is senior consultant and Director of Projects at Form International. Form International is a Dutch forestry consulting firm with experience in forest management certification in the tropical and temperate zones. Its activities range from (CoC) certification to PEFC conformity assessments. As a specialist in forest management, Mr Wanders works on various certification projects such as the Congo Basin Program, PEFC country assessments, TPAC and legality certification projects. None of these activities take more than 40% of his time. It should be noted that Mr Wanders is not employed by FSC in any way.
6. The accusation regarding Prof. Persoon seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the role of the Supervisory Board. In the Netherlands the Supervisory Board supervises the Executive Board of an organisation. In this role the Supervisory Board oversees general policy goals, strategy and finances. The Supervisory Board is not involved in decisionmaking regarding - or supervision of - regular activities of the organisation nor are its members expected to approve of these activities. Furthermore, functions in the WWF-Supervisory Board are honorary posts, members do not receive remuneration. It should also be noted WWF is active in a broad range of themes, of which forest certification is only one.

7. The accusation of a conflict of interest based on Prof. Persoons role as facilitator of a trip of three parliamentarians in 2006 is ill informed about the aims and programme of the trip. The aim was to familiarise the parliamentarians with the Nature-and-Poverty programme in Indonesia, a programme financed by the Dutch Government. Next to meetings with Indonesian parliamentarians and representatives of government, NGOs etc., a field trip was made to the Danau Sentarum area and the city of Pontianak. The group did not visit any logging site. Mr Persoon was chosen as delegation leader based on his knowledge and experience in Indonesia.